

Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
SB 993 AAC Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary
Friday, March 15th, 2013
Dr. N. Summer Lerch

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

I have been a general dentist since 1982. I earned the Dental Team Management Award upon graduation from University of Washington School of Dentistry for my commitment to education and partnership with all the dental auxiliaries I worked with. I attended the two year Family Dentistry Residency at University of Connecticut from 1982-1984. Since, I have attained my Fellowship in the Academy of General Dentistry acknowledging a commitment to continuing education. In 1991 I was Accredited in Cosmetic Dentistry by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. I own a small dental office that concentrates on smiles and healthy gums/teeth in New Haven, CT across from Yale Medical School. I have participated in Doctor's With a Heart, Give Kids A Smile, Mission of Mercy and other ADA/CSDA public service activities. I currently serve on the CSDA's Council on Legislation serving dentists and the public at large inside of my commitment that all people receive the best dental care they can over the United States of America.

The women who were the Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDA) in my dental school were the most important aspect of my training in running a dental office and the ones who voted for me to receive the award. I found these women to be helpful, kind, dedicated to their profession and most importantly, available to me. Professors and administrators were busy, or I needed an appointment with them first. The EFDA's were there on the floor, hands on in the trenches with me, so to speak. And that is how they are in any dental office. The dental assistants are the ones who have time to spend with patients. They are the ones patients turn to with questions expecting answers. The more able the assistant, meaning the more trained with education and practical hands on experience, the more valuable are their responses and thus the care they deliver to patients. EFDA's elevate the dental care that the general public can expect in a dental practice.

Besides elevating the level of care, EFDA's also elevate the quantity of that care. Recently the US Army reported that dentists who work with an EFDA provider are 40 percent more productive than their counterpart dentists working without an EFDA without any compromise in the quality of dental care delivered to the patients. This means more patients can be seen in a given facility in a day's time.

Finally, there has never been a revocation of this licensure. Not one state or jurisdiction which has enabled EFDA's has ever repealed such authorization. Multiple studies of quality and efficiency gains have been conducted, all revealing positive outcomes. Since there have been no complaints or problems with this model, all active studies of its efficacy have been suspended; the simple truth is that EFDA's are a good thing. In many dental schools across our country, students are currently learning to practice with EFDAs. Since this provides a beneficial and concrete career ladder for dental assistants, it also will be a good thing for Connecticut, where most dental assistants are women, boosting self-esteem and confidence.

I urge the Public Health Committee to adopt SB00993, An Act Concerning Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary and enable dentists to employ EFDAs, just as dentists can in many other states. After more than 50 years of positive experience, we think it is time. Thank you.

Respectfully,

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